

## Dharma Reflection Angulimala

There was a bandit named Angulimala. He was murderous, bloody-handed, violent, and merciless. He laid waste to villages and towns. He was constantly murdering people and wore their fingers on a necklace.

Once the Buddha was walking along a road that led towards Angulimala. People passing him going the opposite direction said to him, “Don’t take this road as the murderer Angulimala is on it. Groups of up to forty people have taken this road and they have still fallen into Angulimala’s hands.”

When this was said the Buddha continued walking in silence.

For a second and third time the people tried to dissuade him from continuing but the Buddha kept walking.

By and by Angulimala saw the Buddha coming in the distance. Seeing him, he thought, “It is wonderful, it is marvelous! I have been able to slaughter large groups of people. Now, a monk comes alone, unaccompanied, as if driven by fate. Why don’t I kill him? Taking his sword, shield, bow and quiver, he set in close behind the Buddha.

With a feat of supernatural power the Buddha made it so that Angulimala going as fast as he could, could not catch up to the Buddha walking at his normal pace.

Amazed, Angulimala thought, “While I am fast enough to catch a swift horse or a swift deer, I cannot catch up to this monk.” Stopping, Angulimala called out, “Stop, monk! Stop, monk!”

In reply, the Buddha said, “I have stopped. Angulimala, you should stop as well.

Amazed, Angulimala addressed the Buddha in the following verse:

While you are walking, you tell me you have stopped;  
While I stand stopped, you tell me I have not stopped.  
How is it you have stopped and I have not?

In reply, The Buddha said,

I have forever stopped all violence toward living beings;  
But toward things that live, you have no restraint.  
That is why I have stopped and you have not.

Angulimala responded:

You entered this great forest for my sake.  
Having heard your teaching, I will renounce evil forever.

Angulimala flung his weapons into a deep ravine, bowed at the Buddha’s feet and asked for ordination. With the simple words, “Come, monk” Angulimala was made a monk and in due time he became an arhant, a fully liberated person.

Some time later, the venerable Angulimala went in to the town of Savatthi for alms. While he was there, people started throwing things at him until blood ran from his cut head. His bowl was broken and his outer robe was torn. In this state, Angulimala went to see the Buddha. The Buddha told him, “Bear it! Bear it! You are experiencing here and now the results of deeds because of which you might have been tortured in hell for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years.”

Later, while the venerable Angulimala was alone on retreat experiencing the bliss of liberation, he uttered the following exclamation:

Who once was negligent  
But now is not  
Illumines the world  
Like the moon set free from a cloud.